

Progressive Calf Training
<http://owenjohnstonkarate.com>

Following my usual line of “little equipment, high rewards” style of training, I’ll be using two planks of wood (which are sanded down and glued together) for calf raises. The calves come into play in most activities that involve the legs, and especially so in martial arts. If you are heavily into martial arts or strength training, your calves may already be in great shape, but at least a bit of calf specialization can provide an extra edge. Doing so also does help strengthen the associated connective tissues (Achilles tendon etc) as well as provide a great way to rehab the ankles.

The gastrocnemius and soleus make up the bulk of the muscles of the lower leg. The former acts on two joints (knee and ankle). If you really want to work a two joint muscle a lot harder, lock out one joint while working the muscle from the other joint. For instance, doing calf raises with locked knees makes them tougher. Increasing the range of motion also toughens an exercise. Thus the use of a step to do calf raises off of. There are many more potential tougheners, such as rep / set schemes, cadence, changing the positioning of the feet, using one foot at a time, adding weight, and so forth.

I always look for ways to make an exercise harder without adding weight. Using your own body weight as the resistance, and adjusting the leverage of an exercise, as well as other tougheners, can yield many years worth of strength and athletic gains. Progressive calisthenics use this sort of approach to build functional, athletic strength! In the words of Al Kavadlo, progressive calisthenics is “an open-ended, individualized fitness modality centered around the concept that one’s own body weight (and the proper manipulation of leverage) can provide ample resistance for strength training, regardless of one’s current fitness level.”

For more, read his full article here - <http://goo.gl/iQnhlJ>
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